

Prunus africana

Rosaceae

Indigenous

STANDARD/TRADE NAMES: Red stinkwood, *Prunus* (Kenya).

COMMON NAMES: **Kamba:** Mumbaume, Mutimailu; **Keiyo:** Tenduet; **Kikuyu:** Muiiri; **Kipsigis:** Arareut; **Kisii:** Omoiri; **Luhya:** Mwiritsa; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumuturu; **Maasai:** Olkoijuk; **Marakwet:** Tenduet; **Meru:** Mweria; **Nandi:** Tendwet; **Ogiek:** Tenduet; **Sabaot:** Oromoti; **Swahili:** Kiburabura; **Tugen:** Kunyukwa.

DESCRIPTION: An evergreen tree to 25 m or, rarely, a shrub. In forests, the dense foliage is open, the branches often pendulous, small buttresses occasionally present, but in grassland the tree is more stunted. **BARK:** Rough, dark, scaling irregularly, branches corky, **branchlets dotted with breathing pores.** **LEAVES:** Leathery, glossy dark green above, oval to 10 cm, **margin with shallow rounded teeth, leaf stalk typically pink to reddish brown, to 2 cm.** Crushed leaves have a bitter almond smell. **FLOWERS:** Sprays on stalks about 8 cm long, very small, fragrant, green-white. **FRUIT:** Rounded, **about 1 cm, dark red to purple-black, often bilobed,** containing one seed and topped by a persistent style.

ECOLOGY: A useful timber tree widespread from West to southern Africa, usually in high-rainfall areas, 1,500–2,300 m. It is a common tree in Kakamega and Nyahururu forests, Limuru and Kericho. Occurs in moist forest and riverine vegetation, also forest remnants and margins. Agroclimatic Zones I–III.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, timber (construction), furniture, poles, utensils (mortars), carvings (earrings), medicine (leaves, bark), bee forage, shade, ornamental, mulch, green manure, windbreak, veterinary medicine.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings, wildings.

SEED: Average around 5,000 fresh seeds per kg; germination 60–80%.

treatment: Fleshy parts should be removed from the seed.

storage: Seed does not store well (recalcitrant). Fresh seed should be used.

MANAGEMENT: Fairly slow growing, pruning. Coppices when young.

REMARKS: Wildings are commonly used for large-scale planting. Seeds are dispersed by birds. The heartwood darkens to a dark red. In recent years in Kenya,

as in several other African countries, this tree has come under heavy pressure of bark extraction. The bark is exported for use by the pharmaceutical industry for the manufacture of a drug used to manage complications associated with prostatism, a benign enlargement of the prostate. The tree is becoming rare in the wild, although now a favourite in agroforestry and afforestation campaigns. It is also increasingly used as a shade tree and ornamental in the homestead. Hollow trees are often inhabited by bees. *Prunus* is a large genus with several hundred members mainly found in the north temperate zones and including well-known fruit such as apricot (*P. armeniaca*), plum, almond, peach and cherry.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; ITDG and IIRR, 1996; Katende et al., 1995; Kokwaro, 1993; Mbuya et al., 1994; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990.

